Met Office

March 2016

The averaging period used for the following assessment was 1981-2010.

UK overview

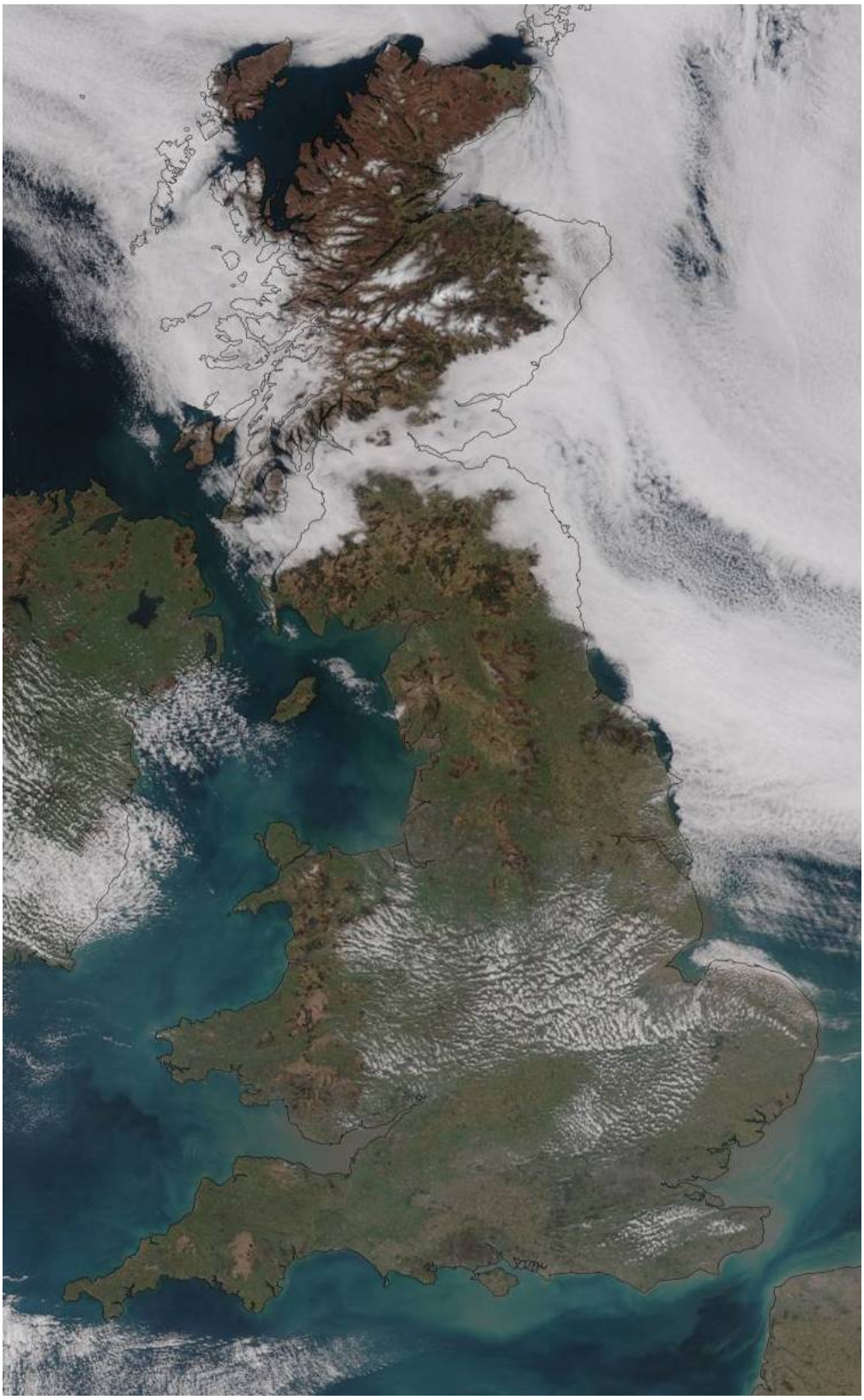
At the start of March, the UK's weather was dominated by low pressure, bringing wet and fairly cold weather with some short-lived snowfalls, mainly on high ground. There were strong winds in the south-west on the 2nd, associated with Storm Jake, and it was very wet across England and Wales on the 8th. However, high pressure became established from the 13th to the 23rd, bringing dry, settled weather, often with plenty of sunshine for western areas. More unsettled weather then returned during the last week, and Storm Katie brought damaging winds on the 28th, particularly in the south-east.

The UK mean temperature was 5.3 °C, which is 0.2 °C below the 1981-2010 long-term average. It was milder than average in Scotland, but most of England and Wales was colder than average. Rainfall was 88% of average, and it was generally wetter than average in central and eastern England, mainly due to two very spells (8th to 9th and 27th to 28th). Scotland and Northern Ireland were drier than average with only around half the normal rainfall in some central and northern locations. It was also generally sunnier than average, especially in many western areas, with 115% of average overall, but some eastern parts of the country had near or slightly below-average sunshine.

The UK monthly extremes were as follows: A maximum temperature of 18.7 °C was recorded at Braemar (Aberdeenshire) on the 17th. A minimum temperature of -8.1 °C was recorded at Altnaharra (Sutherland) on the 10th. In the 24 hours ending at 0900 GMT on the 27th, 57.4 mm of rain fell at Dinorwic (Gwynedd). A wind gust of 92 knots (106 mph) was recorded at Needles Old Battery (Isle of Wight) on the 28th. A snow depth of 17 cm was measured at Malham Tarn (North Yorkshire) at 0900 GMT on the 4th.

The satellite image below shows the UK mostly cloud-free on Thursday 17 March 2016, with a large area of high pressure dominating the weather. Low cloud affected parts of Northumberland, the Central Belt and eastern Scotland. The temperature at Braemar (Aberdeenshire) reached 18.7 °C, but on Scotland's east coast at Inverbervie (also Aberdeenshire) only 4.7 °C. Image copyright

NERC Satellite Receiving Station, Dundee University, Scotland



Weather impacts

The month saw notable wind and rain impacts from Storm Jake on 2nd, an un-named storm on the 9th and Storm Katie on the 28th, with a fortnight of settled weather with high pressure established during the middle of the month.

On the 2nd, storm Jake brought strong winds across the south-west. Roads were closed due to fallen trees, 600 properties left without power and tiles blown from roofs in parts of Wales. Snow caused difficult driving conditions across Northern Ireland, bringing some transport disruption, while commuters in North and West Yorkshire were also affected by hazardous conditions due to snow.

There was further snow overnight from 3rd to 4th across northern England. This caused the closure of many higher roads in Cheshire, Derbyshire and West Yorkshire, with some reports of overturned vehicles and difficult driving conditions across Wales and the West Midlands. Almost 200 schools were closed across east Lancashire, Manchester and West Yorkshire. Passengers were delayed at Manchester Airport, and Leeds Bradford Airport suspended all morning flights.

On 8th to 9th March, further strong winds caused some structural damage in the south-west. More than 6,000 properties were without power, and fallen trees caused transport disruption across Cornwall, while a lorry was blown over on the A30. The rain also caused some flooding problems in the Midlands, with Network Rail reporting some flooding on railway lines. 28 properties were flooded in Northamptonshire, and part of the A14 in Cambridgeshire was closed due to flooding.

There were further strong winds in the south on the 26th, bringing some localised disruption from fallen trees, while a young girl was tragically killed when a bouncy castle was blown some distance across a park in Harlow, Essex.

Storm Katie brought strong winds to south-east England on Easter Monday 28th March. The M25 QE2 Bridge, the M48 Severn Bridge and the A38 Tamar Bridge were all closed for a time, flights to and from Gatwick and Heathrow were diverted or cancelled, the Port of Dover was closed for a period, and more than 200,000 properties without power across the area. The gable end of a pub in Battersea collapsed, and a crane was bent backwards in south London.

England diary of highlights

March began unsettled and quite cold with low pressure, and there were some short-lived snowfalls, mainly on high ground. There was a settled spell from the 13th to 23rd, but the last week was unsettled again, with some disruption, especially in the south-east, from Storm Katie on the 28th.

The mean temperature for March was 0.6 °C below the 1981-2010 long-term average. Rainfall was 121% of average, mainly as a consequence of two very wet periods (the 8th to 9th and 27th to 28th). It was drier than average across Cumbria but wetter than average in central and eastern areas. Sunshine was 115% of average, and it was a very sunny month in parts of the West Country, but with near or below-average sunshine in parts of the north-east.

1st to 7th:

The 1st was cloudy and wet with rain moving south-eastwards, clearing Kent by mid-afternoon, while showers affected western parts, these wintry in the north. The 2nd was a day of sunny spells and showers, the showers wintry on high ground, with gales across the south-west. A mix of sunshine and showers continued on the 3rd, followed by rain overnight with some snow in the north. The 4th was bright and showery in the south but cold and wet across the north, and the rain turned to snow in some areas, giving 17 cm of lying snow at Malham Tarn (North Yorkshire). After a cold start to the 5th, patchy rain moved south along eastern areas, turning

showery late in the day, with some sunny spells elsewhere. The 6th had sunny spells but it was increasingly showery in the east, with overnight snow in Cumbria. A bright, sunny day followed a widespread frost on the 7th with 10.9 hrs of sunshine recorded at Morecambe (Lancashire), although there were wintry showers along eastern coasts.

8th to 13th:

After a widespread frost on the 8th, with -7.1 °C at Benson (Oxfordshire), it was milder with rain spreading to all areas later, and totals exceeded 25 mm in the West Midlands and Cotswolds. The 9th was cloudy and wet, with gales or severe gales across the south-west, and a gust of 91 mph at Berry Head (Devon), but it dried up from the west later. The 10th was mainly dry and cloudy with some patchy rain from Northumberland to Hampshire, with more bright or sunny spells across the south-west and East Anglia. A foggy start across central and eastern parts on the 11th, clearing mid-morning, then mainly dry with some sunny spells although patchy rain reached the north-west late in the day. The 12th again started on a foggy note for central and southern areas, and a dry and mild day followed but it was quite cloudy in some areas. There was a foggy and frosty start over central and eastern parts on the 13th, and it was breezy near the south coast, but otherwise it was a dry and bright day.

14th to 23rd:

It was dry, sunny and mild on the 14th, but cooler on the east coast and breezy in the south. After early frost, the 15th was generally dry, sunny in the west but cloudy in the east with patchy drizzle near the east coast. The 16th was dry and bright but rather hazy and quite cool near the east coast. The 17th was mostly dry with plenty of sunshine but it was noticeably cooler and cloudier along north-eastern coasts. It stayed sunny and warm in the far south-west on the 18th but much cooler and cloudier with patchy rain or drizzle elsewhere. The 19th was mostly dry, cool and cloudy with patchy drizzle across the south-east. The 20th was a similar day, but sunnier north of the Midlands, and generally warmer. The 21st was cloudy over the south-east, east Midlands and north-west and sunny elsewhere, and generally warm but cooler in the Midlands. It was mainly cloudy again with patchy drizzle in places on the 22nd but sunnier over the south-east and along the east coast, and fairly warm. It was cloudy generally on the 23rd, cool over the north and Midlands but brighter and warmer in the south.

24th to 31st:

The 24th was an increasingly cloudy day with rain and drizzle spreading from the west. It was dry, warm and sunny on the 25th with temperatures reaching 15.6 °C in St James's Park (Greater London) and 11.7 hours of sunshine at Bude (Cornwall). Strong winds on the 26th accompanied by long periods of rain gave 35.4mm of rainfall at Shap (Cumbria). It turned cooler on the 27th with sunshine and showers, before gales and heavy rain spread in from the south-west with the approach of Storm Katie. It was stormy in the south on the 28th, with gusts of 106 mph reported at Needles (Isle of Wight), and widespread rain clearing to sunshine and showers. It was still windy on the 29th with sunshine and showers, and more prolonged rain crossing the country from midday. It was sunny and relatively warm everywhere on the 30th with scattered showers in the north and the south-west. The 31st started cloudy over the south-east, but otherwise it was sunny and warm with just a few scattered showers in the north.

Wales diary of highlights

March began unsettled and quite cold, and there were strong winds associated with Storm Jake on the 2nd. The weather was settled and anticyclonic from the 13th to 23rd, bringing plenty of dry weather with some warm sunshine, but it turned changeable again in the last week.

The mean temperature for March was 0.5 °C below the long-term average. Rainfall was 89% of average. Sunshine was above average except in parts of the north, with 125% of average sunshine overall.

1st to 7th:

The 1st was mainly cloudy with a band of rain moving south-eastwards, clearing Monmouthshire by mid-morning with showers feeding into the north-west by evening, these wintry over hills. The 2nd was a day of sunny spells and showers, with wintry showers over hills and gales on exposed western coasts; a gust of 81 mph was recorded at Aberdaron (Gwynedd). Patchy rain cleared early on the 3rd, leaving sunny spells, before thickening cloud spread east giving rain and hill snow. The 4th started cloudy in the north, and rain spread south, becoming persistent, particularly in central areas. Cool and showery with sunny spells after early rain cleared away southwards on the 5th. The 6th was cool and cloudier with scattered wintry showers in the north turning heavier overnight. After a frosty start on the 7th, there were morning showers in the north and sunny spells elsewhere before rain spread into western parts in late evening.

8th to 12th:

The 8th was milder and largely dry before heavier rain spread from the west during the evening. The 9th started cloudy and wet with gales across western and southern coastal areas, with gusts to 68 mph at Aberporth (Ceredigion), but it became drier and brighter from the west in the afternoon. The 10th was mainly dry, with only a few isolated morning showers across Pembrokeshire and the Lleyn Peninsula, and sunny spells developed in the afternoon. There was a sunny frosty start to the 11th, and it remained dry with sunny spells until evening when cloud spread from the north-west with some patchy rain across Anglesey. The 12th was a mainly cloudy but dry day with some sunny intervals across the south-east, staying on the mild side with temperatures widely above 10 °C.

13th to 23rd:

It was dry, sunny and warm on the 13th with 16.2 °C recorded at Porthmadog (Gwynedd). The 14th was dry, sunny and warm following a cold start. Dry again on the 15th with plenty of sunshine and a maximum temperature of 15.4 °C at Porthmadog. The 16th was another warm, dry and sunny day, although increasingly cloudy later. It was dry again on the 17th with widespread sunshine and stayed mild. After a cold start on the 18th with -5.6 °C at Sennybridge (Powys), it was dry with warm sunshine in the west but cooler and cloudier in the east. The 19th was cool and cloudy but dry throughout. It was warmer and sunnier on the 20th. The 21st was cloudy and cool in the north, but sunny and mild in the south, with 11.4 hours of sunshine at St Athan (South Glamorgan). It was cloudy and cooler everywhere on the 22nd. The 23rd was a mainly cloudy day, and it was cool in the north but milder in the south.

24th to 31st:

The 24th was quite mild with widespread rain, but the rain became confined to southern parts later. It was dry and mild with widespread sunshine on the 25th but became increasingly windy in northern parts. Winds gusted to 69 mph at Capel Curig on the 26th with widespread rain, though it turned more showery later. There was sunshine and showers on the 27th but rain and strong winds spread into the south by evening, giving 39.4 mm of rain at Libanus (Powys). It started wet and windy across central and southern parts on the 28th as Storm Katie passed south-east through the morning, but then turned brighter with scattered showers. Cool and windy on the 29th with sunshine and showers, and more prolonged rain crossing the country around the middle of the day. There was sunshine and just a few showers on the 30th and 31st.

Scotland diary of highlights

March began unsettled and quite cold, with some snow in places. It was settled from the 13th to 22nd, with plenty of sunshine in the west. Rather unsettled conditions returned during the last week of the month.

The mean temperature for March was 0.5 °C above the long-term average. It was a dry month except in Aberdeenshire, with 64% of average rainfall. Sunshine was below average near the east coast but it was sunnier than average elsewhere, with 113% of average sunshine overall.

1st to 7th:

The 1st started cloudy and wet with some hill snow, the rain clearing the Borders by mid-morning before heavy, wintry showers moved across the whole country from the west. The 2nd was bright and showery, with snow over hills, and 11 cm of lying snow at Tulloch Bridge (Highland). The 3rd was cool and largely dry for many but with showers for the Northern Isles and rain turning to snow in the south-west. Rain in the Borders and north-east moved south on the 4th with sunshine and showers further north. The 5th was cool with showers in the north-east passing through into the Borders, with sunny periods elsewhere. The 6th was largely sunny after a frosty start but turned increasingly showery in the north-east and there was some snow for the Borders. The 7th started cold and frosty, but became a sunny day with 10.6 hours of sunshine recorded at Edinburgh Gogarbank, but rain, which turned to snow on high ground, spread east later.

8th to 12th:

Rain and windier conditions overnight cleared on the 8th to leave sunshine and showers, before further rain and hill snow spread from the south-west during the evening. The 9th saw a cloudy start with patchy rain in the east, clearing around lunchtime to leave a mainly dry and bright afternoon with a few showers across the Western Isles. The 10th started frosty with a minimum of -8.1°C at Altnaharra (Sutherland), followed by a mainly sunny day across the north-west Highlands, though cloud increased here in the evening with patchy rain, and it was cloudier across eastern coastal areas and the Borders. The 11th was cloudy, mild and wet with bands of rain crossing the country, heaviest over north-western areas, with 57.4 mm of rain at Alltdearg House (Isle of Skye), though the rain was patchier elsewhere. Another mainly cloudy mild day followed on the 12th with rain spreading from the south-west, heaviest across the north-west Highlands, and patchy rain lingering over Aberdeenshire.

13th to 22nd:

It was generally dry, fairly bright, and warm on the 13th, temperatures exceeding 15 °C in Aberdeenshire. The 14th was warm, dry and sunny, with 16.1 °C reached at Auchincruive (Ayrshire) and 11.2 hours of sunshine recorded at Tiree (Inner Hebrides). It was dry again on the 15th with plenty of sunshine in the west but cloudier and cooler in the east. The 16th was another dry day, sunny in the north-west but cloudier elsewhere, with 11.0 hours of sunshine at Stornoway (Western Isles). It stayed sunny across the north-west Highlands on the 17th but was cloudier elsewhere, and it was warm with Braemar (Aberdeenshire) recording 18.7 °C. The 18th was dry and quite warm but mostly cloudy. It was sunny in Lothian and the Borders on the 19th but cloudy and cool conditions dominated elsewhere with isolated showers across the north-east later. It turned warmer on the 20th, dry and sunny over Tayside, but cloudy elsewhere with occasional rain and drizzle. It was generally warm on the 21st, sunny in the south and east but cloudy elsewhere with some rain over the north-west. The 22nd was bright and warm in the east, but cloudy and cooler in the west.

23rd to 31st:

It was generally cloudy on the 23rd with rain for the north and west, but dry elsewhere. Overnight rain spread east on the 24th to leave a largely dry and mild afternoon. It was dry again on the 25th with widespread sunshine in the east but turned increasingly windy in the west later. Continuous rain on the 26th with increasingly strong winds gave 42.2 mm rainfall at Cluanie Inn (Highland). It was cooler on the 27th with sunshine, wintry showers and strong coastal winds, Fair Isle recording gusts to 84 mph. The 28th was cool again with scattered showers in the north-west and widespread sunny spells. Cool and windy on the 29th with sunny spells and widespread showers, some wintry. The 30th and 31st both started cold and frosty, with sunshine, and showers building during the day and spreading to all areas, wintry over higher ground, but dying out in the evening.

Northern Ireland diary of highlights

March began changeable and quite cold, with short-lived snowfalls mainly across higher ground. However, with high pressure established during the middle of the month the weather became much more settled, dry and warm at times in the sunshine. The last week was more unsettled again, with a bright and showery end to the month.

The mean temperature for the month was 0.2 °C above the 1981-2010 long-term average. It was a dry and sunny month overall, with 76% of average rainfall and 116% of average sunshine.

1st to 7th:

The 1st began mainly cloudy and wet, the rain clearing to sunshine and scattered, heavy showers, these wintry over hills. The 2nd was a day of sunny spells and blustery wintry showers, resulting in 14 cm of lying snow at Lough Fea (County Londonderry). A widespread frost on the 3rd led into a bright morning, but rain spread from the west in the afternoon. The 4th started with wintry showers, easing by lunchtime to leave a largely dry but cool afternoon. The 5th was a cool day with plenty of sunshine, and scattered wintry showers mainly in the west. The 6th started frosty but bright, with isolated wintry showers mainly along northern coasts and sunny spells elsewhere. The 7th saw a frosty start with sunshine and showers for much of the day but cloud and rain spread from the west later.

8th to 12th:

The 8th was a little milder and cloudier with rain spreading east. The 9th was day of sunny spells and scattered showers. The 10th was mainly dry and cloudy, apart from a few isolated morning showers. The 11th was a cloudy and wet day with the rain clearing in the evening but followed with showers. The 12th saw a cloudy and wet morning but became drier for the afternoon and evening with some late sunshine, and it was warm with a maximum temperature of 15.0 °C at Giants Causeway (County Antrim).

13th to 22nd:

It was dry and quite warm but generally cloudy on the 13th. The 14th was a warm, dry and sunny day, and the 15th also had widespread sunshine with temperatures widely exceeding 12°C. The 16th was dry and warm with plentiful sunshine in some areas, with 10.4 hours of sunshine at Magilligan (County Londonderry), although some places were mainly cloudy. The 17th was a sunny and dry day, though a little cooler. After a frosty start on the 18th, with -5.6°C at Katesbridge (County Down), it was a dry but cloudy day. The 19th was dry and fairly mild but mostly cloudy, but the 20th was sunnier, while remaining dry and quite mild. The 21st and 22nd were also dry, but were cloudy and cooler.

23rd to 31st:

The 23rd was cloudy with patchy light rain, but still fairly mild. The 24th was a little cooler, with early morning rain clearing to leave a dry afternoon. The 25th started dry and bright but became increasingly cloudy and windy, with 25.8 mm of rain at Trassey Slievenaman (County Down). The 26th started with rain, turning more showery with strong winds. There were prolonged wintry showers with sunny spells on the 27th. It was cool with sunshine and showers, occasionally with hail, on the 28th and 29th. There was sunshine and just a few showers on the 30th and 31st, and it turned a little warmer.

Last updated: 20 April 2016

Met Office